**Seven “Show Don’t Tell” Tips**

**SHOW DON’T TELL**  
by Kathy Temean

**Show don’t tell is something we hear over and over again from our critique groups, editors, and publishers.**

**What they are really saying is they want you to provide details and let  your reader interpret them.  If you can do this, your story and writing will be more interesting to read.**

**Remember, we want those editors to not be able to put down our manuscripts.**

**Here are some tips:**

**1.  Give clues that show the setting, the story, and the character. Put the mental “camera” in the scene and have it run.  This “camera” can record not only sight but all five senses – Taste, Sounds, Touch, Sight, Smell.  Describe what this camera ”records.” Let your reader experience it firsthand.  Let the reader feel the scene and deduce the meaning.**

**2. Most of your showing will involve sight and sound, but remember to use touch as well. Try to add at least one detail involving taste or smell.  They tend to be the most powerful in evoking emotion and memory in readers.  Don’t forget to use them.**

**3.  Use reporter questions*–who, what, when, where, why, how.*  These questions can help turn bland writing into active writing.  Also ask yourself these questions when revising:**

**·  Does this sentence paint a picture for the reader?**

**·  Does it leave questions in the reader’s mind?**

**·  Does it answer the questions *who, what, when, where, why, how*?**

**·  How could it answer *who, what, when, where, why, how* and paint  
               a picture for the reader?**

**4.  Use action words to show a character’s feelings.**

**5.  Check your work for telling moments.  Look for adjectives in your rough draft. Circle each one.  Analyze each one. Is there a way to pull an adjective out altogether and *show* it instead?**

**6.  Search for “was” in your document. While “was” isn’t always used in telling situations, it is 80% of the time.**

**7.  Another place to check is your dialog.  Are your characters telling each other things they already know, just so you can tell the reader?  Have your story reveal that information either through exposition, summary, or flashback, rather than by forcing a character to include the information in dialogue, monologue, or silent musing.**

**Is there any time where it is okay to tell?  Yes, sometimes when you are in the revision process you might find an expansive scene that would be better off being replaced with a brief summary to help pick up the pace.**

*Love to hear, if you have some other techniques that everyone could benefit by trying.*

*Kathy*